

History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in South Florida

Florida has a deep Mormon heritage, going back as far as 1845, when Phineas Young, the brother of Church President and western colonizer Brigham Young traveled to the state. While there, he introduced the Church to Native American tribes.

Church growth was slow but steady, and by 1897 Florida's first official congregation of the Church was organized in Jefferson County.

J. C. Neubeck was the first Mormon resident of record in Miami. He settled in the area in 1907 and worked in a machine shop forging tools that would help extend the railroad to Key West. In 1909 the first missionaries were assigned to Miami, and for the next 16 years meetings of the small group were held in Neubeck's home.

On 14 November 1920, 18 people met under a cluster of sea grape trees on Miami Beach to organize a Sunday School, and J. C. Neubeck was called as the first superintendent. The Sunday School met each week with an average attendance of 20 to 25 people from Hollywood, Fort Lauderdale, Homestead and other neighboring communities. Some came as far as 30 miles — a two-hour drive each way over primitive roads. The first chapel in Miami was subsequently dedicated in 1930 by Elder Joseph Fielding Smith, a senior leader of the Church from Salt Lake City.

In 1947, Church leaders organized what would be the first stake in Florida, which covered most of the state. A stake is similar to a diocese.

Approximately 15 years later, another stake — this time in Miami — was organized, and in October of 1970, Church President Spencer W. Kimball traveled to Miami to organize the Fort Lauderdale Stake.

Over the years, numerous congregations have been organized throughout Florida. The first temple in the state, the Orlando Florida Temple, was dedicated in 1994. As the Church grew, so did its diversity, and membership increased among Cuban, Latin American and Caribbean immigrants.

In response to this growing membership, Church President Thomas S. Monson announced the construction of the Fort Lauderdale Florida Temple in 2009. Construction began in the summer of 2011.

The 30,500-square-foot Fort Lauderdale Temple will serve approximately 30,000 members of the Church in south Florida.